

**AUSA Army Birthday Ball**  
**LTG Robert L. Caslen, Jr.**  
**Kansas City, MO**  
**5 June 2010**

Thank you for that kind introduction. It's great to see everyone here tonight to help celebrate the 235th Birthday of our Army and to recall our Army's history of service to the Nation. And it's wonderful to see not just Soldiers, young and old, in the audience but also numerous civilians and friends from our surrounding communities, because this is, after all, America's Army. Thanks for helping us celebrate tonight!

From the American Revolution to today's war – American Soldiers have always been the Strength of our Nation, willing to fight for the freedoms and the way of life we enjoy.

In the cold winter of 1776, and with the fate of our Nation uncertain, Thomas Paine captured the challenging times in his first pamphlet *The American Crisis*, writing "These are the times that try men's souls: The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but *he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.*"

Our Revolutionary War Soldiers banded together in an all-volunteer force to fight for independence and a democratic way of life. 235 years later, U.S. Army Soldiers are still volunteering to do the "heavy lifting" for our Nation, and some pay the ultimate price to defend America in the 21st century. Freedom is certainly not free. Today's Soldiers -- volunteers all -- represent much that is right and good about our Nation. And like their predecessors since 1775, today's Soldiers are engaged in helping keep America safe and in defending the ideals and freedoms we hold dear.

America's Army – Soldiers, Families, and Army Civilians – epitomizes what is best about America. Their willingness to sacrifice to build a better future for others and to preserve our way of life exemplifies Army values. Families play an increasingly important role in the readiness of our All-Volunteer Force by providing the support network for our Soldiers. We constantly strive to improve the quality of life for our Soldiers and their family members as they continue to make tremendous sacrifices for our Nation. Many of you in the audience have had to face the challenge of deployments, as well as to make that choice to re-enlist or take that next assignment. Your presence tonight is a testament to the strength of our Army Families that you were able to confront that challenge and choose to continue your service to our Nation. I would like to say thank you for all of the family members in the audience, for your support to your Soldier, and for your sacrifices in order to help strengthen our Army.  
(Applaud)

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the steadfast support from our civilian workforce. You are the engine that keeps our Army working, day in and day out. Our Army Civilians' commitment to excellence and steadfast support to our Soldiers and Families is vital for the operation and success of our Army. Thank you for your loyalty and service. (Applaud)

Finally, I wish to recognize all of the Veterans present, whose service has done so much to preserve our liberties and freedoms. Throughout our history, our country has been blessed with great individuals willing to raise their right hand to support and defend our Constitution. Thank you for your service. (Applaud)

As General Casey said about the nature of this conflict...

"We are locked in a war against a global extremist network that is fixed on defeating the United States and destroying our way of life. This foe will not go away nor will they give up easily, and the next decade will likely be one of persistent conflict. At stake are the power of our values and our civilization, exemplified by the promise of America, to confront and defeat the menace of extremist terrorists. At stake is whether the authority of those who treasure the rights of free individuals will stand firm against the ruthless and pitiless men who wantonly slay the defenseless. At stake is whether the future will be framed by the individual freedoms we hold so dear or dominated by a demented form of extremism. At stake is whether we will continue to expand freedom, opportunity, and decency for those who thirst for it, or let fall the darkness of extremism and terror."

The tremendous men and women serving in our military today are members of the 9/11 generation; a generation that saw our nation attacked and elected to be a part of the military while our country was at war knowing full well that they would join a unit deploying to war. They never wavered or questioned -- they quietly stand among the generations that have gone before them, standing in the gap between the evil that is out there, and the values of our nation and our way of life. By their efforts over the last 9 years, they have joined the generations of those who stormed the beaches at Normandy, hunted the enemy in the A Shau Valley in the Republic of Vietnam, parachuted into Panama, beat incredible odds in the streets of Mogadishu in Somalia, and currently subdue our enemies in both Iraq and Afghanistan, while also rebuilding those two countries.

Our current generation of Soldiers doesn't just recite the words of our Warrior Ethos -- they live them. "I am an American Soldier. I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade. I am an American Soldier."

They are volunteers -- all of them -- and our country has put the security of our Nation on their backs again and again and again, and they consider it a privilege to do their duty each and every time. Yet many Americans do not understand the incredible value

and worth of this treasure, but that is OK – because this humble, yet competent generation, would want it no other way.

When the policy makers finish talking, when the debate has ceased, when negotiations have failed and orders are given... it is today's Soldiers mission to execute national policy for the last 300-500 meters to a given objective. They are the substance behind any policy undertaken by this country deemed important enough to send our National Treasure into harm's way... absolute proof positive that the United States means business when their boots hit the ground.

They are currently fighting on the most complicated battlefield in the history of warfare. An asymmetric "3 block war" if you will. They engage in vicious close combat on one block... protect children as they attend school on the next block... and restore water and power on the third... all of this simultaneously. They do, on a daily basis, make life or death decisions with only the time it takes to blink an eye -- to process, decide, and take action.

They find themselves as part mayor, part district chief, police chief, and arbitrator of disagreements amongst ethnicities and tribes as varied as our 50 states. They personify daily, the oxymoron of the "Strategic Corporal". A decision that they make under duress, with little time for reflection or thought, may quite literally impact the actions of policy custodians in our nation's capitol.

They are the latest Band of Brothers and Sisters miles away from "the flagpole" and making things happen in the very best way that they can. Sometimes making it up as they go. The techno wannabees in the corporate world can't begin to imagine the vast responsibilities that they have accepted. They are scrutinized like no warriors ever before. Expected to eradicate our enemies, pacify the critics, and abide by the rules of land warfare as we all are committed to doing. They've held more responsibility and do more in the last few years than most people have in an entire lifetime. High expectations to be sure... but they have been phenomenal.

History will gloriously record what they have accomplished for not only our country, but also for the men and women of the free world, who thirst for democracy, and repulse extremism, violence, and exclusion – and seek moderation, tolerance, and inclusion for all human beings.

They are the men and women who believe in the power of our Nation's values and civilization, exemplified by the promise of America. They are the ones who confront the menace of extremism and terrorism. And they are the ones who seek to expand opportunity and decency for all who thirst for it.

Few Soldiers in our history have faced a greater challenge. But in this challenge, they reflect the very best in our Army and our nation. They have been called – and have answered — as had the Prophet Isaiah who when asked “who will go?” -- he replied “send me!”

Two weeks ago, President Barack Obama delivered the following at the West Point commencement address.

“America does not fight for the sake of fighting. We abhor war.... General MacArthur said, “the soldier above all others prays for peace” -- we fight because we must. We fight to keep our families and communities safe. We fight for the security of our allies and partners, because America believes that we will be safer when our friends are safer; that we will be stronger when the world is more just.

From the birth of our existence, America has had a faith in the future -- a belief that where we're going is better than where we've been, even when the path ahead is uncertain. To fulfill that promise, generations of Americans have built upon the foundation of our forefathers -- finding opportunity, fighting injustice, forging a more perfect union.”

The graduating cadets that our Commander in Chief was addressing were not even in high school when 9/11 occurred. Yet they, like all of the other new lieutenants being commissioned this year through ROTC, and all of our new enlisted Soldiers, have chosen to wear the uniform and serve their country.

Whether battling the Taliban in Afghanistan, supporting the young democracy in Iraq, or handing out emergency food and water in Haiti, our Soldiers have repeatedly demonstrated their devotion by continuing to answer the call to duty. Today's Army is strong, capable, and motivated. I am honored to be able to serve beside them.

Our Soldiers, Families, Army civilians, and Veterans make an incredible difference every day. In a world of complex threats, you give our Nation stability, liberty and prosperity. Birthdays tend to make us reflect on the state of the world, to reassess whether we are achieving our goals, whether we are following the path – adhering to the values – set in earlier times. Today, repeatedly tested in this era of persistent conflict, our Soldiers have emerged stronger with a deeper commitment to our core values and beliefs. You continue a proud tradition of selfless service to our Nation. I cannot thank you enough for everything you do.

And so, tonight, as we celebrate the 235<sup>th</sup> Birthday of our Army, let's give thanks for all the individuals whose collective strength has made our Army the tremendous organization it is today.

Thank you.

Army Strong!

Acknowledgements: Portions of these remarks were used (but not specifically referenced within the text) from portions of the following speeches given as indicated.

1. General George Casey, Chief of Staff USA, Arrival Message, 10 April 2007.
2. LTC Randolph C. White, Jr., Battalion Commander 2-58 INF, One Station Unit Training Graduation, 21 April 2006, Fort Benning, FA.